

IMPORTANT INTELLIGENCE FROM LIBERIA.

V. 85
no. 2

A letter, just received, from Mr. LOUIS SHERIDAN, is so important that I deem it a duty to publish it, duly authenticated, for the information of my countrymen, both white and colored, although its publication may expose both the writer and myself to undeserved obloquy from persons whose interests, committals, or feelings are greatly concerned in perpetuating the Colonization scheme. Doubtless there are still some excellent persons who contribute time and money in aid of this plan, who do not see its injurious bearings upon the welfare of the free people of color in the United States, or that it is, as WILBERFORCE expressed himself, an "obstruction" to the emancipation of the slaves. But, agreeing with Mr. GEORGE SMITH, that the Colonization Society "is the greatest enemy of the colored people," and that "its policy towards them is cruel and wicked," it would be an act of inhumanity not to apprize them of the state of things on the coast of Africa when new and extraordinary efforts are made to induce them to colonize. At the same time the information will prove useful to well-meaning, but deluded, persons who, under a misapprehension of facts and the bearings of the Society upon the condition of their free and enslaved countrymen, aid, by their contributions, the scheme of expatriation.

A great out-cry was made when the testimony of Mr. THOMAS C. BROWN, a highly respectable colored citizen, was publicly taken at Chatham Street Chapel, after his return from Liberia, because many of his statements were deemed injurious to the Colonization Society. This intelligent and upright witness was grossly calumniated, for giving a narration of facts, and yet, subsequently, viz. on the 6th day of May, 1836, Gov. J. B. PINNEY, in conversation with WILLIAM GOODELL, in this city, corroborated the principal statements made by Mr. Brown. In the present case it is to be feared, that similar abuse may be poured out upon Mr. Sheridan, and his correspondent; his letter may be denounced as a "forgery"; it may be said that it is inconsistent with itself; that a colored man could not have written such a letter; and that Sheridan's character has undergone a great change since he left his native country. To all this it will be sufficient to say, his handwriting and character are well known in this city, and that the original letter may be seen on application to Rev. SAMUEL B. CONNISH, editor of the "Colored American," No. 2 Frankfort Street.

In the early part of 1837, perceiving by the newspapers, that Mr. Sheridan contemplated going to Liberia, I addressed a letter to him, as follows:—"New-York, 8 March, 1837, Mr. Louis Sheridan, Payetteville, N. C.—Dear Sir, Hearing it stated, that you are about going to Liberia, permit me to ask what has changed your mind on this subject since you told me in this city that you considered the Colonization scheme the greatest humbug ever palmed off upon the American people. Is it new and severer oppressions, under which you are suffering, in your native State, N. C., that induces you to quit your native shores? I wish also to call your attention to the twenty slaves you promised me you would emancipate. Are they emancipated? If not, why have you not fulfilled your promise? Please to give me the desired information, and believe that I shall always feel much interested in your welfare and usefulness. Yours very respectfully, LEWIS TAPPAN."

Mr. Sheridan replied to the above 31st March, 1837, and this closed our correspondence, until I unexpectedly received the letter from Liberia. In his reply he gives the reason of his determination. Speaking of the free people of color he says: "Our caste being that in which the smallest degree of interest is conceived, nothing possible to be done is left unattempted to degrade and bring us down below the standing of their very slaves, and the consequence is that, under the now existing state of things, we, the free people of color, are denuded of all the privileges marking the attributes of a man." He says he might go on to detail the wrongs to which the free people of color were subjected under color of law—but that his "heart sickens at the review." That "in this state of feeling ever present with him, he had been written to again and again to go to Liberia, and he had finally made up his mind to do so—that his mind remained unchanged in regard to the Colonization scheme—that he thought no better of it than before—that he was resolved to go *some where*, as he thought the time would come when the free colored people "would be compelled to leave the country."

The inquiry will be made by many, *Who is Louis Sheridan?* The first knowledge the undersigned had of him was, his presenting a letter of introduction, August 26, 1834, to Arthur Tappan & Co., from Hon. JOHN OWEN, ex-governor of North Carolina, written not long after the mobs in this city, stating that Mr. Sheridan was a citizen of Elizabethtown, Bladen County, N. C. well known to him, as a worthy and intelligent merchant, worth about ten thousand dollars, and responsible for all the contracts he might make. Agreeably to Mr. Owen's request, Mr. Sheridan was introduced to several merchants in this city, and purchased, on credit, about twelve thousand dollars worth of goods, which, it is believed, he paid for with honorable fidelity. He was well known to THOMAS L. CALLENDER, Esq., merchant of this city, and to Messrs. E. L. & W. WINSLOW, of Payetteville, N. C., and to many other respectable persons in Philadelphia and New-York.

The character of Mr. Sheridan can be further ascertained by reference to the Reports of the Colonization Societies. In the XXI Annual Report of "the American Society for Colonizing the Free People of Color of the United States," it is remarked that "the Managers stated in their last Report, that the Brig Rondout had been chartered by the Society to convey a select company of emigrants from Wilmington, N. C., to Liberia. Unfortunately this vessel did not afford the accommodations expected; and Louis Sheridan, (a free man of color of great respectability and an interesting company of his relatives and friends, who had made arrangements to embark in her, postponed their departure to a more favorable opportunity." * * * "These united Societies," (the joint Societies of New-York and Pennsylvania,) "have just despatched an expedition with a very promising company of free persons of color from North Carolina, among whom are Louis Sheridan and his relations, mentioned in the early part of this Report." In the VI Annual Report of the "Colonization Society of the City of New-York," p. 10, it is stated that "in December, an expedition, consisting of eighty-four colonists, a large proportion of them emancipated for the purpose of colonizing, left Wilmington, N. C. in the *barque Marine*, of whose embarkation Mr. Buchanan, agent of the Pennsylvania Society, who attended on the occasion, gives the following account in his report to the boards: 'Gentlemen, I have the honor to inform you, that in obedience to your direction, I proceeded to Wilmington, N. C. where I arrived on the 20th November, and immediately commenced arrangements for fitting out an expedition for your colony at Bassa-Cove.' After giving an interesting statement of the promptitude with which the master in many instances anticipated his slaves, and the liberality with which he furnished provisions for the voyage; and also the eagerness with which the men of color seized the opportunity of going to the land of liberty, Mr. Buchanan concludes his report with the following character of Louis Sheridan, a colored man, who went as an emigrant with the expedition. 'Mr. Louis Sheridan, who is already personally known as the leader, I may say, the father of this expedition, is in my opinion every way worthy of your confidence, and eminently qualified for great usefulness in Africa. For energy of mind, firmness of purpose, and variety of knowledge, he has no superior. He is emphatically a self-made man, who has fought his way through adverse and depressing circumstances, to an eminence seldom, if ever attained by any of his color in this country. He has for years been engaged in an extensive and successful business, and is worth fifteen to twenty thousand dollars. Throughout his native State he is honored and esteemed by all who know him, and he leaves this country with the best wishes of every class of the community. It may be asked, why such a man, with an ample fortune, influential friends, and well established reputation, should wish to emigrate? It is, because, with all his dignity and talents, he cannot in this country enjoy an equality of rights; because, with all his refinement and worth, he is doomed in the dearest intercourse of life to degrading associations; and more than all, because he is fired with a noble desire to elevate the down-trodden millions of his brethren, by giving them a country and a name. These are the motives which induced Sheridan and his associates to leave their native land. The whole number of emigrants enrolled, when I left Wilmington, was eighty-four. In this connexion, permit me to express my grateful acknowledgements of the hospitality and various assistance rendered me by the citizens of North Carolina generally, in the prosecution of my enterprise."

Such was the estimation in which Mr. Louis Sheridan was held, previous to and after his departure for Africa. Every reader of the annexed letter will judge for himself of the measure of credit to be awarded to the statements of the writer. But it should be understood, that the merits of the Colonization scheme do not depend upon the truth of the statements, made from time to time, for or against the Colonies. The Colonization Society is objected to for the following, among other reasons: It is opposed by the intelligent colored people of this country; it has made itself an auxiliary in the expulsion of the people of color; it colonizes slaves; it is not hostile to slavery; it trades the free blacks, sanctions and strengthens the existing prejudice against them; discourages and opposes their elevation in this country, and countenances oppression to induce emigration; in its publications it apologizes for slavery—justifies the sin of slave-holding—and "cries peace" to all who perpetrate it; it tends to fortify the system of slavery, by making it EASIER, SAFER, more reputable, and MORE PROFITABLE for masters to hold slaves; and it vices this tendency as a claim upon the patronage of slaveholders; it condemns immediate emancipation, and eman-

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cipation in any way, which permits the emancipated to remain in this country; it denounces and vilifies all who advocate immediate emancipation; it opposes the instruction of slaves; it lowers the tone of public sentiment upon the subject of slavery—weakens the abhorrence of its abominations—and blunts public sympathy; it holds one language at the South, and another at the North; it is an impossible remedy; and the example of the Colonists has been injurious to good morals.

LEWIS TAPPAN.

NEW-YORK, NOV. 24, 1838.

TO LEWIS TAPPAN, Esq., New-York, U. S. America, *via* London.

VERY DEAR SIR,

In looking over some memorandums of my correspondence with the Colonization Societies in America, I find a letter, addressed by you to me, when in N. C., the subject matter whereof having been replied to at that time, the review at this date seems only to call up the remembrance of former kindnesses, an acknowledgement whereof I would on no proper occasion omit to make. This premised, I now set me to the task of making you acquainted, so far as my own knowledge, derived from observation and information, extends, with the particulars of our situation, and the prospects connected with these settlements of the Colony in Liberia. I was sent here under the patronage of the Young Men's Colonization Society of Pennsylvania and New-York, for the purpose of making developments of the resources of the soil in Africa. I accordingly arrived on the 7th day of February, 1838, on board the barque *Marine*, but had no communication from the shore until the next day; a note was sent to the Captain Buckmar, enquiring whether his was the vessel containing the expedition looked for from the United States. We were then on the eve of starting for the shore, and, of course, did not wait to have any further correspondence on the subject, but pushed off, and on the 8th day of February, my feet first pressed the soil of wretched Africa. The situation of these two places, Edina and Bassa Cove, is picturesque enough, and were the people and the Government industrious and efficient, something of the delightful might be made out of them; this, however, is altogether gratuitous on my part, for panegyric from me is the last thing looked for by Colonizationists, and again, the climate, soil, and economy here forbid that anything of importance shall be accomplished, at least for some time to come.

I was, on landing, walked up to a tolerable looking house, and introduced to the Rev. Governor J. J. Matthias. This Governor had heard of me, my purpose, design, intention, &c. &c., and every accommodation and assistance should be given me, as it had been particularly requested by Gov. Buchanan. But lo the sad discrepancy there oft times is betwixt our practices and our professions; our accommodations were proposed in some half-a-dozen pens made of poles, about the size of such as a Southern white man, in his fury, would snatch up to beat a negro with; and these pens covered with thatch,—do you know what that is?—the foliage of a shrub called bamboo, tied on, so as when dry to admit the water by the most easy and convenient means, next to leaving the roof uncovered. These I utterly refused to go into; and had to hire houses from the people of Edina, at a great expense, for the whole of our expedition, 70 in number.

My next essay was to make provision for such of our people as could get on shore, during that day, as nothing could be landed from the vessel. I was very readily furnished by the Governor's store-keeper with a barrel of rotten corn meal, for which, owing to my having none to return in place of it, I had to pay the pretty little trifle of \$8. My next application to his Excellency, was on the subject of Land. I found that I was destined to a settlement up the St. Johns, 6 miles from the bar; and that on my taking the oath of allegiance, I could have what quantity of land I wished. But now comes the tug of war.—After delay of 4 weeks, and so much valuable time lost, I was presented with the Constitution of Bassa Cove, manufactured for the special use of Hankerson or some other person's slaves. Surprise, indignation, and every other temper such an insult was calculated to inspire, aroused me almost to a transport of fury, and I vowed, so help me God! to die, rather than take an oath to support such a Constitution. I then told his governorship, that I had come from the United States to be freed from the tyranny of the white man, and that I should not be easily brought again to submit to it;—but, my dear Sir, 'tis but a vain boast, for all the while that we are here we are subject to it. Fancy to yourself an establishment—call it a colony, or plantation, or what you will—with but a single white man at the head of its affairs; the laws that govern it framed by him, or by his predecessor, which is the same; himself the executive, and so down to the veriest lackey in the concern, all of his appointment; see this same white man in the possession of, and accountable to nobody that can bring him to account for, all the funds contributed by the gullies of Colonization; see him without the smallest degree of mercantile knowledge, laying on and charging enormous advances, say one or two hundred per cent. on the very necessities procured by voluntary contributions, gotten together under pretence of benefitting the colored man in Africa, and of which he receives not one iota beyond what he buys, and must pay for at the enormous advances charged on their original cost in the United States.

And for whose benefit are these charges made? not the individual donors, not the managers of the Society, not the Colonists;—who then? why just Nobody, that father of all mischiefs. But it is characteristic enough of any man, who would come here and satisfy himself with the blushing honors of being called Governor, over a few crazy freed negroes and mulattoes. You may be disposed to smile at the application I make of the term crazy freed negroes, &c. but, Sir, listen to facts, and then judge of its propriety. In the first place, they have aimed at producing certain effects by unapt causes. 2dly, they have exerted reasoning, if such it can be called, without proper data to ground their opinions on; and 3dly, they have striven to deduce certain consequences from illy founded premises. Now to explain this—Some of the Colonists, on their arrival in this country, were in the possession of some amount of money; and instead of remembering themselves to be no more than exiles from their native home and husbanding their resources, they set up a kind of aristocracy, and in order to maintain their dignity, spent more than all they had. A second class, are those who went upon the plan of living by their wits;

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and of all the devil's inventions to keep people poor, this has most wonderfully succeeded : for how can men thrive by such means, when there is not in their community subjects for their wits to be exercised upon. And a third class, ashamed to beg and too proud to work, went upon the trading scheme, for finding the gullibility of the natives and the easy and cheap rate for which their stuffs could be had, they chose rather to compound with their backs and stomachs until they could no longer be trusted, and so their revenues ceased ; and finally, every one, until now, seems to have forgotten that we are to obtain our bread in the sweat of our face. You may fancy this a distorted picture of affairs in Liberia, but, Sir, I would rather my right hand should perish from my body, than it should pen a lie : For there is not an individual man who does not eat the beef and pork of some Society, or who has not ate of it until he has almost become choked therewith, but will tell you, if he had it to do again, he would prefer to die rather than come here. I have conversed with several, not only of these settlements, but many belonging to the old Colony, and have asked them why they have suffered such lies favoring these Colonies to be circulated and published in the United States.

Why, Sir, say the more intelligent, misery, you know, likes company ! and, Sir, say another class, I did not like to become conspicuous in any way, either for or against, the Society. And, say a third class, we were afraid as we were here, if we said anything no more people would come, and we should be too weak to stand against the natives. And, say a fourth, which forms the great majority, we know nothing about what has been said, only this we know, that if we had the means of getting away we would not stay here. Now, Sir, it is my being involved with such a wretched pack that gives acerbity to my temper. Would I not rather die, than do the devil's work in thus deceiving people to their ruin ; for it does seem to me, that with the one exception of Mr. Nobody making money out of the goods sent here, instead of giving them, as I always thought or understood was intended to be done, to the poor perishing colonists for their help and support, the rest is only a well schemed project of destruction. It has been said that the Colony at Monrovia was improving. No such thing, Sir ; it is DYING, but may not expire before its sisters Edina and Bassa Cove shall have taken its disease (the slave trade,) and both go off together.

It has been said that the slave trade had disappeared from this part of the coast. If ever it was the case, there is now a fearful reaction ; for the first vessel I saw near the shore, a few miles above, and in sight of Monrovia, was shown to me as a slaver ; and at Crew Town, a place in sight of our Governor's seat, I have seen divers vessels, of whom it was said to me, they are slavers, Sir. And so far from the slave trade being at all diminished, I am of opinion that it now is carried on around, about and amongst us to a fearfully alarming degree. Again it has been said, that the establishment of Christian Colonies of free blacks on this coast, would tend to Christianize Africa. I always doubted the fact, and now I know it to be FALSE. So very far from this being the case, I will venture to affirm, that could a correct analysis be made of the progression of mind, and the weight of physical influence in the two castes, that the preponderance would be shewn in favor of the colonist approximating nearest to the Heathen's Barbarity. True, there have been some very few converts of natives to Christianity ; but for every one so converted, five Americans have pulled off their clothes and gone naked : and there is not a child now growing up in the Colony who would not prefer speaking Hebo or Bassa to common English, and not only using their jargon but also adopting their manners and customs, and such, to me, are fearful signs as regards Colonization.

The land on the sea coast, you in all probability have been informed, is sandy, and in many places low and marshy, and hence it is very poor and good for nothing ; but as you go toward the interior it is gently undulating, with here and there a bluff, making to the river, as the mounts or capes do on the sea. This land is of a mixed quality, and some very good spots may be selected for farm settlements. Such an one is, I think, selected by our masters for our occupancy ; my having refused to become a citizen of this realm by swearing to be a white man's slave, threw me out of the pale of regal favor, and I had to take a lease of 600 acres, to enable me to carry out my verbal promise, made to the Society who sent me here. I think it probable we shall succeed, though I have already made myself sick, and as there is no alternative but pump or drown, I will work so long as I can, and quit when I can do no more. I think it unnecessary to enter into a detail of the peculiar barbarousness of this country, and its yet more barbarous natives ;—though if there were to be seen nothing more than its roads and waters, it would, in the "tout ensemble," be a tolerable prospect : but oh ! the millions of millions of Ants that every where cover the ground, and mounds of earth, yclep'd bug-a-bug hills, thrown up here, there, and every where, you know not how or why ; and the chattering of Monkeys, and the unearthly sound of the Whaw-whaw, enough in themselves to drive civilization back to its original darkness, and make chaos come again.

I believe I will weary you no longer with this detail, but if you desire it, you can have an abundance more of the same relation.

I know not that our experiment will make for or against the Colonization scheme, as I am not yet prepared to say, whether people ought to come here or not ; this is one of the objects I have in view, and to arrive legitimately at these conclusions, will require further experiments than I have yet made. When my conclusions are formed either way (all's alike to me), you shall have it ; and, in the meantime, I beg you send me some American papers, as I should like to know what is going on in the States, not that I feel much interest in these matters at the present, but that it would be agreeable to know the ascendancy of parties as they occur, forasmuch as we expect them to change.

Accept my high consideration, and am, yours most respectfully,

LOUIS SHERIDAN.

EDINA, LIBERIA, 16th JULY, 1838.